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Tell Congress to pass the **Veterinary Medicine Mobility Act TODAY!**

ROLL CALL

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America's Transportation System Is Foundation of American Competitiveness | Commentary

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By Rep. Bill Shuster
April 30, 2014, 5 a.m.

There's no disputing that our nation's infrastructure requires improvements. For many Americans, an overly lengthy commute to work is proof enough that we need to do better. Organizations such as the American Society of Civil Engineers regularly confirm this perception when they score our infrastructure with grades barely above failing.

But if we don't improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our transportation network, there's much more at stake than the time and money wasted sitting in traffic. American jobs and our competitiveness in the global marketplace depend on it.

Highway congestion, rail bottlenecks, decaying locks and dams, insufficiently deep harbor channels, an air traffic control system based on World War II-era technology — while significant issues on their own, taken collectively these challenges pose a formidable threat to the flow of commerce among the states and with our trade partners around the world.

With up to 10 percent of a product's total cost attributable to transportation, delays and inefficiencies in moving raw materials and goods add unnecessarily to the cost of doing business for manufacturers, companies and other job creators. This may lead them to look elsewhere for a better deal, and take jobs with them.

Addressing these threats to commerce is one the federal government's essential duties, set forth in our Constitution. As chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I have focused our efforts on this key federal function, developing and moving legislation that not only strengthens our infrastructure, but that fundamentally makes our country more economically competitive.

One of my top priorities has been passing legislation to address the nation's port and waterways infrastructure needs. The Water Resources Reform and Development Act was developed in a bipartisan manner with input from many stakeholders, and passed the House 417-3. House and Senate negotiators have since made considerable progress on a final agreement.

I am confident Congress can complete action on this signature jobs initiative soon, sending a measure to the president's desk that provides time- and money-saving reforms to accelerate project delivery, and that helps our ports and waterways catch up with growing needs and growing demand.

With U.S. trade volume expected to double within a decade, and double again by 2030, seeing this legislation signed into law will be critical to ensuring the United States is prepared to take advantage of economic growth opportunities. On the other hand, failure to act will hasten our own competitive decline and allow other nations that are investing heavily in their own infrastructure to continue making gains.

The water resources legislation has provided the committee with a successful model, and we are utilizing a similar inclusive process in developing other legislative priorities.

The current surface transportation law expires at the end of the fiscal year, and reauthorizing U.S. highways, transit and highway safety programs is another integral step in maintaining and improving our competitiveness. The committee's goal is a long-term bill that continues to streamline the project delivery process, cuts red tape, reduces regulatory burdens, provides greater flexibility for states and local partners, enhances the movement of freight and promotes innovation.

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